Please replace the Abstract with the following amended Abstract:

A switching device for telecommunication networks, which comprises a) a number of I/O ports, arranged by groups in I/O cards, for inputting incoming data streams and outputting outgoing data streams of arbitrary protocols, b) a switching fabric SF for handling internal data streams, c) a number of adaptation functional blocks AFBs associated with the switching fabric SF and forming a common pool of AFBs. Each AFB is capable of performing at least one of the following adaptation functions: - converting one or more of the incoming data streams or portions thereof into one or more internal data streams, and - converting one or more of the internal data streams handled by the SF into one or more outgoing data streams or portions thereof. The switching device also comprises a distribution block DB <u>for</u> adapted to allow switching between the I/O ports and the adaptation functional blocks AFBs, and so configurable to provide a required connection between any of the I/O ports positioned on any of the I/O cards, and any of the adaptation functional blocks AFBs from the common pool of AFBs.